

REMARKS

In response to the restriction requirement set forth in the Office Action of January 14, 2003, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the above-captioned patent application in view of the following election and remarks:

In the above-noted Office Action, the Examiner withdrew a previously issued restriction requirement and has additionally found the application contained three distinct inventions: Group I (claims 1-12, 17-30, 36-48, 58-65, and 67-80); Group II (claims 49-57, and previously cancelled claims 13-16 and 66); and Group III (claims 31-35).

Applicants hereby elect Group I (claims 1-12, 17-30, 36-48, 58-65, and 67-80) for prosecution on the merits. This election is made without traverse. Claims 31-35 and 49-57 designated by the Examiner as Groups III and II are now cancelled from the Application. Claims 1-12, 17-30, 36-48, 58-65, and 67-80 remain in the their as-filed form.

In response to the election of species requirement for Group I, Applicant elects Species I (the embodiment of Figure 2a) for prosecution on the merits. This election is made without traverse.

In response to the election of subspecies requirement for Group I, Applicant elects subspecies A (a ligament having a conformable portion) for prosecution on the merits. This election is made without traverse.

The Examiner has indicated that claims 1, 2, 5-12, 17, 18, 24, 29, 30, 36-48, 58-63 and 67-72 are readable on Species I.

Independent claims 1, 17, 18, 30, 36, 63, 73 and 77 each appear to recite a ligament having a conformable portion (subspecies A). In addition, dependent claims 42 and 72 also each appear to recite a ligament having a conformable portion.

Accordingly, claims 1, 2, 5-12, 17, 18, 30, 36-39, 42, 63 and 72 appear to be readable upon Species I, subspecies A.

Applicants believe that inventorship remains the same as in the as-filed case.

In addition, please provide any extensions of time which may be necessary and charge any fees which may be due to Deposit Account No. 10-0750, but do not include any payment of issue fees.

Should there be any remaining or further questions, the Examiner is requested to place contact the undersigned directly.

Respectfully submitted,

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